

We receive this life from Jesus in baptism, and it becomes a life that wells up in us to be given and shared with others.

This baptismal water becomes a spring, a fountain in our lives. The water of baptism springing into life becomes an ecumenical witness of Christian love in action.

Concrete gestures by ordinary people are what we need in order to build unity. They give relevance to ecumenical relations and witness to the Gospel.

Questions:

- How do you interpret Jesus’ words that through him we may become “a spring of water gushing up to eternal life”?
- To which situations should churches speak with a single voice in order to be springs of living water?

Prayer

Triune God,

Make us witnesses to your love. Grant us to become instruments of justice, peace and solidarity.

May your Spirit move us towards concrete actions that lead to unity.

This we pray in the name of Jesus Christ, in the unity of the Holy Spirit.

Amen.

DAY 7 | TESTIMONY:

“Give me a drink” (John 4:7-15)

Numbers 20:1-11, Psalm 119:10-20, Romans 15:2-7

Christians affirm diversity and dialogue as God’s gifts to us. Encountering and exchanging experiences with the other, even other religious traditions, can change us and open to us the opportunity to reach the depths of the well. The act of coming near to other people and being willing to drink from their fountain enables us to learn about the wonders of God that can and should be announced and heard in the language and way of being of every people and culture, every church or religious group.

In Brazil, we have much to learn from the Guarany indigenous wisdom. In Guarany language, there is no equivalent word for the term “religion” as separate from the rest of life. The Guarany people remind us that Christianity was first called “The Way.” “Our good way of being” or “The Way” calls us to bring to harmony all parts of our lives before God.

Questions:

- How has your understanding and experience of God been enriched by encounter with other Christians?

- What can Christian communities learn from indigenous wisdom and other religious traditions in your region?

Prayer

Creative God, how endless are your creations, your names, your colours! How infinite is your presence among us.

Give us wisdom and humaneness to learn of you again.
Draw sin away from us.

We thank you for your creativity, for your freedom. Stay with us, God.

Amen.

DAY 8 | WITNESS:

Many believed because of the woman’s testimony (John 4:27-30, 39-40)

Exodus 3:13-15, Psalm 30, Romans 10:14-17

Many believed in Jesus because of the woman’s witness. She could recognize in that stranger “a spring of water gushing up to eternal life.”

Mission is a key element of Christian faith. True mission does not attempt to convert others or to attack their way of living the faith. Those who truly announce Jesus approach others on the basis of dialogue, mutual learning, and unity that respects differences.

To witness and to announce the dream of unity requires us to live out what we proclaim. It requires that we learn how to drink from the living water without taking hold of the well. The witness of the woman led her community to believe in Jesus because there was coherence between her words and her own transformation.

Questions:

- How has your church or community talked about mission?
- How are the life stories of the people in your community a witness to unity?

Prayer

God, spring of living water, make of us witnesses of unity through our attitudes more than through our words.

Help us to understand that we are not the owners of the spring, and that the gushing living water cannot be contained in our jars alone.

Teach us that our mission is to share your grace with those to whom we proclaim you. We ask this in the name of your Son Jesus Christ, in the unity of the Holy Spirit.

Amen.

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**WEEK OF PRAYER
FOR CHRISTIAN UNITY 2015**

“Jesus said to her: ‘Give me a drink.’” (John 4:7)



8 DAYS OF PRAYER

DAY 1 | PROCLAMATION:

It is necessary to go through Samaria (John 4:1-4)

Genesis 24:10-33, Psalm 42, 2 Corinthians 8:1-7

The conflict between Jews and Samaritans went back centuries. The negative reputation of Samaria came from its mix of races and religions. Samaritans, in turn, had difficulty accepting Jews.

Jesus makes it clear that “going through Samaria” is a choice he is making; he wants to encounter those who represent difference. Dialogue with the different makes us grow. It also means that times of transition are needed on a journey. These times are not free from conflicts and crises. In the encounter between Jesus and the Samaritan woman, conflicts come to the fore. But gradually they translate themselves into an opportunity for cultural encounter and reciprocal growth.

Diversity and plurality are expressions of God’s greatness. They are God’s gifts. May we learn from God’s grace; may we drink from it and may we savour it!

Questions:

- What does it mean for you and for your community of faith “to go through Samaria”?
- What steps has your church taken to meet other churches and learn from them?

Prayer

God of all peoples and all faces,

Teach us to go through Samaria to meet our brothers and sisters from other churches.

Allow us to go there with an open heart so we may learn from every church, religion and culture!

We know that you are the source of unity. We pray for the unity Christ wills for us.

Amen.

DAY 2 | DENUNCIATION I:

Tired of the journey, Jesus sat down facing the well (John 4:5-6)

Genesis 29:1-4, Psalm 137, 1 Corinthians 1:10-18

When he arrived at the well, Jesus decided to stop. While he was resting, a Samaritan woman came near the well to fetch water. This approach and encounter took place at Jacob’s well, a symbolic place in the life and spirituality of the people of the Bible.

We need “wells” to lean upon, to rest and let go of disputes, competition and violence. This is our challenge.

Every way of experiencing and living faith in God can be seen as a droplet. Droplets, when combined, form a rich diversity – a richness that human understanding cannot attain – of the death of the divine. God is known in many ways. God cannot be imprisoned or reduced to fragments of truths.

Questions:

- What are the main difficulties for experiencing unity among our churches?
- What is a common “well” upon which you can lean and rest from your disputes and competitions?

Prayer

Gracious God,

So often our churches choose the logic of competition and dispute by desiring to be the best.

We are weary of this race to excel. Allow us to rest at the well.

Refresh us with the water of unity drawn from our common prayer.

May your Spirit who hovered over the waters of chaos bring unity from our diversity.

Amen.

DAY 3 | DENUNCIATION II:

“I have no husband” (John 4:16-19)

2 Kings 17:24-34, Psalm 139:1-12, Romans 7:1-4

The topic of the conversation is the married life of the woman. Jesus said to the woman that she has had five husbands, and the man she has now is not her husband.

Jesus does not place much importance on the woman’s situation. Rather, he acknowledges her life but remains open to her, to encountering her.

Jesus’ behaviour in this moment allows us to open new windows and raise other questions: questions that challenge power relationships in society, especially in the church, and the resulting violence against women. These questions are about the unity we seek and the unity for which we pray.

Questions:

- What are the sinful structures that you can identify in your own community?
- What can our churches do to prevent violence and to overcome violence directed against women and girls?

Prayer

O God of grace,

Give us wisdom to welcome without judgment those who also proclaim you.

Transform our hearts and our lives.

Lead us to encounter the other with the same grace you give to each of us.

May the walls that prevent communion be transformed into bridges.

Amen.

DAY 4 | RENUNCIATION:

Then the woman left her water jar (John 4:25-28)

Genesis 11:31–12:4, Psalm 23, Acts 10:9-20

The woman leaves behind her water jar. What might this mean for us? Encountering those who are different has the potential to change us. These changes may mean breaking with our visions and understandings of the world or holding onto them more tightly, closing ourselves to new worldviews.

The encounter between Jesus and the Samaritan woman shows that dialogue with the different, the stranger, can be life giving. If the woman had followed the patriarchal patterns of her culture, she would have left when she saw Jesus approaching the well. Both she and Jesus broke with conventional patterns of behaviour. Through this breaking forth, they showed us again that it is possible to build new relationships.

Questions:

- Meeting Jesus demands that we leave behind our water jars. What are those water jars for you?
- What are the main difficulties that prevent you from leaving behind your water jars?

Prayer

Spirit of love,

Help us to learn that encounters with the other can open new horizons.

Help us to break through our limitations and face new challenges.

Help us to go beyond fear in following the call of your Son.

In the name of Jesus Christ, we pray.

Amen.

DAY 5 | ANNUNCIATION:

You have no bucket and the well is deep (John 4:6-15)

Genesis 46:1-7, Psalm 13, Acts 2:1-11

After a long walk, fatigue strikes. Exhausted in the heat of noon, Jesus feels hungry and thirsty and has no means to draw water.

He is in a foreign territory and the well belongs to the woman’s people.

The more we grow in unity, share our buckets and join the pieces of our ropes, the deeper we dive into the well of the divine.

How to make the first move? We take the initiative to enter into a foreign land, to become a stranger, to cultivate a desire to learn from the different.

When we are ready to accept that we do need each other, we become like children, open to learning. And that’s how God’s Kingdom opens for us.

Questions:

- What are some situations in which your church has helped another church or has been helped by any church?
- What reservations does your church have about accepting help from another church? How can these reservations be removed?

Prayer

God, spring of the living water,

Help us to understand that the more we join together the pieces of our ropes, the more deeply our buckets reach into your divine waters.

Awake in us the desire to always search for the other.

Help us sit at the well together to drink from your water, which gathers us in unity.

Amen.

DAY 6 | TESTIMONY:

Jesus said: “The water that I will give will become in them a spring of water” (John 4:11-15)

Exodus 2:15-22, Psalm 91, 1 John 4:16-21

The dialogue that begins with Jesus asking for water becomes a dialogue in which Jesus promises water. Later in this same gospel, Jesus will again ask for a drink. “I thirst,” he says from the cross, and from the cross Jesus becomes the promised fountain of water that flows from his pierced side.